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Sent: Thursday, October 29, 2015 1:38 PM
To: ssweeny@cde.ca.gov; Kenneth McDonald; Tom Adams
Cc: Cynthia L. Chamberlin; Seira Santizo Greenwood; David Hayes-Bautista
Subject: Fwd: Link to 5th and 8th grade framework

Hi Mr. Adams

As per our prior conversation regarding the California History Social Science Framework, I am sending you and the Chair of the Committee, Mr. Ken McDonald, the enclosed information on Cinco De Mayo for consideration at the November meeting.

I have also cced Dr. David Hayes-Bautista and his team at UCLA incase you have any questions. The email to the state framework we had bounced back.

Please let me know if there is a need for us to attend the meeting and provide public testimony for the importance of including Cinco De Mayo into the state standards as a California holiday founded by Latinos that has continuously been celebrated in the state for over 153 years with links to the US Civil War.

Thank you,
Lisa D. Baca
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STUDYING THE CINCO DE MAYO IN CALIFORNIA’S FOURTH- AND EIGHTH-GRADE SOCIAL STUDIES

Adding materials on the history and origins of the Cinco de Mayo holiday to the fourth- and eighth-grade social studies curricula of California’s schools should not be seen as a radical idea. In fact, it fits organically into the already established Social Science Content Standards for those grades, as will be shown below.

Many people think Cinco de Mayo is a Mexican holiday that was brought to the United States by Mexican immigrants in the early 20th century, but it is not. It is not even celebrated in Mexico. Some people think that Cinco de Mayo is a “fake holiday” invented by beer companies in the 1980s in order to sell beer, but it is not that, either. Cinco de Mayo is not celebrated as a national holiday in Mexico because it was created and first celebrated by Latinos living in California, in 1862. At that time, the Civil War was ravaging the U.S., and the French had just invaded Mexico with the goal of overthrowing the democratically elected government of President Juárez and replacing it with a monarchy. The majority of Latinos in the U.S. believed in the values of freedom and democracy, and therefore supported the Union in the Civil War and President Juárez’s government in Mexico.

This chapter of the history of California and the history of the United States’s Civil War has, until recently, been all but forgotten. Nonetheless, it is an important one, for it not only provides new perspectives on the contributions of Latinos to California’s history and on new perspectives on the Civil War, but also explains the origins of a holiday very widely celebrated, though not well understood, in the United States today: Cinco de Mayo.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CINCO DE MAYO HOLIDAY AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE TO CALIFORNIA AND UNITED STATES HISTORY

Most histories of the U.S. Civil War concentrate on events in the eastern part of the country. They say little about what was happening during that time in the rest of the country, and rarely do they place the conflict taking place within the United States in any sort of international context. As a result, students not infrequently come away from their study of the Civil War period with the mistaken idea that the western part of the country, and indeed the rest of the world, was not seriously affected by the conflict and perhaps did not even pay much attention to it. Yet the opposite was true. People of all ethnic groups in the western part of the United States were very much affected by, and involved in, the Civil War. Many of them, with good reason, saw the Civil War as only one front in a larger struggle taking place across the Western Hemisphere to determine whether or not democracy would remain a viable political system, in the face of threats from within and without. They also saw it as a struggle between social attitudes and systems which offered opportunity to all citizens, regardless of race or ethnicity, and those which institutionalized racism and reserved political power for the elite. From this wider viewpoint of the western states and territories of the U.S., the other major front in this larger struggle was Mexico, which was invaded by French troops in 1862.

In the French Intervention, Emperor Napoleon III sought to overthrow the democratically elected government of Mexican President Benito Juárez—who was, not incidentally, a Native American of the Zapotec people—and replace it with a monarchy headed by a European prince, Maximilian of Austria. Yet it was not only Napoleon’s distaste for democracy or French perceptions of Native American and mixed-race Mexicans as uncivilized which prompted this action. Even more than those factors, Napoleon was motivated by a desire to stop the territorial expansion of the United States, which he saw as the main threat to French and other European influence in the Western Hemisphere. He thought that by establishing a monarchical government in Mexico, on the United States’s southern border, France would accomplish that goal. It was also not a coincidence that Napoleon launched the French Intervention in Mexico only in 1862, after the United States had become thoroughly occupied with its Civil War and therefore unable to enforce the Monroe Doctrine. Napoleon’s government was sympathetic to (although not actually allied with) the Confederacy and hoped it would win the Civil War, as that outcome would drastically reduce the United States’s territory and resources, and would establish a useful, friendly buffer state between the U.S. and the anticipated Empire of Mexico.

These developments were of particular concern to Latinos living in California and adjacent western territories during the 1860s, both native-born Californios and more recent immigrants from Mexico, Central America, and South America who had arrived during the Gold Rush (1848–1860). All these former Spanish colonies in the Americas were inhabited by people who were largely of mixed race, and among their first acts when each new republic gained its independence from Spain in the early nineteenth century had been to abolish both slavery and the colonial legal categorizations based on race (the *casta* system) which had privileged those of European descent. After the Mexican-American War, however, the northern half of Mexico’s territory was taken by the United States under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. From that time on, Latinos living in California and the rest of what was now the American West found themselves placed once more under a government which condoned slavery in portions of its territories and legally restricted civil rights for persons of color in all of them. This realization was brought home to them by the sudden huge influx of Atlantic-American population into California during the Gold Rush.¹ The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo did contain provisions meant to preserve, under the new regime, the civil rights of all individuals who had enjoyed them previously as Mexican citizens; but in practice these provisions often were ignored by the Atlantic-American emigrants, or even subverted by new legislation passed by Congress or state and local governments. And although California had entered the Union as a free state, repeated attempts by the slave states and their sympathizers to divide California in two—with the proposal that the southern half be made a slave state—showed that even the personal liberty of persons of color might be in danger.

Therefore, when the national political struggle over slavery broke out into open warfare in 1861, followed by the French Intervention a year later, most of California’s Latinos viewed the two wars occurring simultaneously on the North American continent as two fronts in the a

¹ *Atlantic-American* here is used to refer to the people and culture of the eastern portion of the United States at this time, regardless of their specific ethnicity, appearance, or ancestry. This culture was (and is) English-speaking, with a legal system based primarily on the English common law, and observed folk ways descended mostly from those of the British Isles and northern Europe. African-Americans here are included in the category of Atlantic-American, as they, broadly speaking, also belonged to this culture predominant in the eastern U.S.

larger, common conflict. Moreover, thanks to their own uneasy situation in California, they had a very personal stake in that conflict. They adhered firmly to the side espousing the values of freedom, democracy, and equal civil rights for all citizens, regardless of race or ethnicity—which, in the U.S. Civil War meant the Union, and in the French Intervention meant the beleaguered government of President Juárez. Unfortunately, in 1861 and the first part of 1862, it was beginning to look as though their side was losing, on both fronts. The Confederates were winning battle after battle, and the French army was marching on the Mexican capital virtually without effective opposition. Until, that is, the battle that took place at Puebla on May 5, 1862. In the eyes of California's Latinos, the Mexican repulse of the French at Puebla represented the first significant victory for the forces of freedom and democracy in this continent-wide struggle. They took hope from it and celebrated it both as Latinos (most, though not all, of Mexican descent) and as Americans, as evidenced by the sentiments and ideas expressed in their speeches, songs, and poems performed publicly on the occasion, and by the flags and other images they chose to associate with the holiday.

For most of the nineteenth century, this significance was remembered, and Latinos in California continued to celebrate the Cinco de Mayo in ways very similar to those first used in the 1860s. With the passage of time and the change of generations, however, by the beginning of the twentieth century memories of what the holiday meant began to fade. The arrival of enormous numbers of new Mexican immigrants which occurred around that time—many of them refugees from the violence and disruption of the Mexican Revolution—actually led to a sort of amnesia about the original meaning of the Cinco de Mayo. The new immigrants vastly outnumbered the California-born descendants of the Latinos who had lived through the Civil War and French Intervention, and they were completely unfamiliar with this local Californian holiday. Having been invented in California, the Cinco de Mayo was not a national holiday in Mexico, and was not even observed as a significant date, outside of the city of Puebla itself.² The majority of the new immigrants really had no idea what it was about. Yet they recognized the usefulness to their community of a holiday by and for Latinos, and so they effectively co-opted it. As a result, not only were the holiday's origins soon forgotten, but its meaning and purpose were adapted to the needs of a changed and changing Latino community. A few trappings of the old observances remained, such as the tradition of displaying both the Mexican and the American flags, but by the middle of the century nobody remembered why this was. Cinco de Mayo was now considered a Mexican holiday; and most people in the United States, Latino and non-Latino alike, were under a vague impression that it must have been imported from Mexico by twentieth-century immigrants—if they thought much about it at all.

That is not to say these developments were necessarily negative. The redefinition of the holiday eventually made it more inclusive, by the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, as a celebration and affirmation of pan-Latino identity and culture. Yet over that same period, certain general cultural and economic trends in the U.S. have led to the pervasive commercialization of the Cinco de Mayo—as, indeed, they have to the commercialization of most major American holidays. As this holiday has grown in popularity in recent years and its observance has extended throughout the country, other, even less attractive, contemporary social

² Even in Puebla, ceremonies in memory of the battle of May 5, 1862, were generally government-sponsored, and very different in style to the essentially grassroots community celebrations with parades, fireworks, flag-waving, speeches, parties, and dances that took place in California. This is largely still the case today.

and political trends have sought to use the Cinco de Mayo as a polarizing occasion, especially with regard to the present-day debate on immigration. Therefore, this seems an appropriate juncture for students to learn about the true origins and original meaning of the Cinco de Mayo, as these speak to central issues of U.S. history and modern-day culture, not only for Latinos but also for all Americans.

Learning about the origins and real history of the holiday will serve to dispel some of the common myths that are repeated about it nowadays, and to replace them with facts. One such myth is that the Cinco de Mayo is “Mexican Independence Day”—which it isn’t; because Mexican Independence Day is September 16. Another is that Cinco de Mayo is a foreign holiday—which it certainly isn’t; because it was invented in California in 1862. Yet another common myth is that it is a “fake holiday” invented by beer companies in the late twentieth century—but in fact, it is over 150 years old, and was originally a grassroots celebration by Latinos in the U.S. of their dearly held values of freedom, democracy, and civil rights for people of all races and ethnic heritages.

HOW STUDYING THE CINCO DE MAYO FITS INTO CALIFORNIA’S PRESENT SOCIAL SCIENCE CONTENT STANDARDS

The origins and history of the Cinco de Mayo holiday should be studied by fourth-grade students in the context of, and in partial fulfillment of, the following California fourth-grade Social Science Content Standards for California History:

4.2 Students describe the social, political, cultural, and economic life and interactions among people of California from the pre-Columbian societies to the Spanish mission and Mexican rancho periods.

7. Describe the effects of the Mexican War for Independence on Alta California, including its effects on the territorial boundaries of North America.

4.3 Students explain the economic, social, and political life in California from the establishment of the Bear Flag Republic through the Mexican-American War, the Gold Rush, and the granting of statehood.

2. Compare how and why people traveled to California and the routes they traveled (*e.g.*, James Beckwourth, John Bidwell, John C. Fremont, Pío Pico).³

3. Analyze the effects of the Gold Rush on settlements, daily life, politics, and the physical environment (*e.g.*, using biographies of John Sutter, Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, Louise Clapp).

4. Study the lives of women who helped build early California (*e.g.*, Biddy Mason).⁴

³ One could add to these examples the immigrants who came from Mexico, by land and by sea, and from the rest of Latin America (*e.g.*, Chile), by sea, during the Gold Rush; and also the refugees who came from Mexico during the French Intervention there in the 1860s.

5. Discuss how California became a state and how its new government differed from those during the Spanish and Mexican periods.

4.4 Students explain how California became an agricultural and industrial power, tracing the transformation of the California economy and its political and cultural development since the 1850s.

2. Explain how the Gold Rush transformed the economy of California, including the types of products produced and consumed, changes in towns (*e.g.*, Sacramento, San Francisco), and economic conflicts between diverse groups of people.

3. Discuss immigration and migration to California between 1850 and 1900, including the diverse composition of those who came; the countries of origin and their relative locations; and conflicts and accords among the diverse groups (*e.g.*, the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act).⁵

The origins and history of the Cinco de Mayo holiday should be studied by eighth-grade students in the context of, and in partial fulfillment of, the following. These materials are designed to be used in meeting the following California eighth-grade Social Science Content Standards for United States History and Geography:

8.8 Students analyze the divergent paths of the American people in the West from 1800 to the mid-1800s and the challenges they faced.

5. Discuss Mexican settlements and their locations, cultural traditions, attitudes toward slavery, land-grant system, and economies.

6. Describe...the Mexican-American War, including territorial settlements, the aftermath of the war, and the effects the war had on the lives of Americans, including Mexican-Americans today.

8.10 Students analyze the multiple causes, key events, and complex consequences of the Civil War.

6. Describe critical developments and events in the war, including the major battles, geographical advantages and obstacles, technological advances....

7. Explain how the war affected combatants, civilians, the physical environment, and future warfare.

⁴ One certainly could add to this example any of the Latina women involved in the Juntas Patrióticas de Señoras (Ladies' Patriotic Assemblies)—the first grassroots political groups of, by, and for Latina women in California—during the Civil War and French Intervention in Mexico, such as their originator, Francisca Manso de Cavazos.

⁵ One could add to this the “Greaser” Act of 1856.